

Proximity Vortex - Pick Me! Game

Your relationship with your dog is very important. Your goal is to create dependency in your dog. The time you invest and the interactions that you have with your dog, support your relationship - the good and the not so good. Certain behaviors and cues are relationship dependent. The world is a vast and interesting place with all sorts of distractions that you have to “compete” with. And, ultimately, you want your dog to pick you over a distraction... every time. Sometimes that’s easier said than done!

The Relationship Bank Account

Your relationship with your dog is very important. Certain behaviors (especially ones that require focusing on you, being near you, or choosing you over something else) are relationship dependent: come, look, loose leash walking, to name just a few. The concept of relationship and the cues and exercises that focus on that is one of those situations where it helps to look at them as a bank account. You can pay into the bank account by, for example rewarding eye contact, orientation, remaining near you, coming back to you, etc., and these things teach very specific examples of focus behaviors. But, more importantly, when there is more money in the focus bank account, it makes other choices easier like choosing to orient away from a distraction. The specific behaviors that are being reinforced aren’t as important as the concept that is being developed in investing in the bank account.

Proximity

Never underestimate the power of your dog wanting to be close! We are going to be developing this, supercharging it and turning it into loose-lead walking in no time!

Pick Me! Game (Proximity Vortex)

1. Begin at home in a room and have a bowl with low value treats like kibble next to you tucked out of view, and in your other hand high value treats like chicken or steak. Work in a safe and easy environment within your dogs limits to ensure success.
2. Hold your puppy beside you.
3. Throw out a piece of food and release your puppy to the food
4. Wait for your puppy to return to you - only reward when your puppy comes back to you - you can reward when paws are on you if you want, or not. It’s up to you.
5. Praise your puppy and give her chicken. Then toss out another piece of kibble.
6. Toss out another piece. After your dog eats the treat wait until your puppy turns and comes all the way back to you.
7. Praise and give your puppy chicken when she comes back to you again.
8. Continue playing for a few repetitions and stop the game while your pup is still having fun, or when your puppy stops going to the kibble and chooses you!
9. Build some duration by giving a few pieces of chicken, one after the other while your puppy is with you. This also builds confidence in your puppy being close to you and comfortable with contact on you.

You can play this game sitting on the floor, in a chair, or walking around a room. Once your puppy masters it inside, take it outside in a low-distraction, secure location and play the game.